



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Information

Press Service



Release - Immediate.

February 2, 1928.

PREVENT FURTHER RAIDS ON BIG ROBIN ROOST

Conservation Work of Local Sportsmen
and Business Men in North Carolina
Aided by U. S. Game Warden

"Your prompt action in assisting United States Game Warden Birsch to stop the illegal killing of robins at the roost near Asheboro, N. C., has probably saved the lives of many thousands of these valuable birds." Letters to this effect, recently written by W. C. Henderson, associate chief of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, to a number of sportsmen and business men of Randolph County, North Carolina, recorded what is to be hoped will be the end of robin killing in that section.

For many years that part of the State had had its tales of vast hordes of robins that in former days used to select cedar thickets in the vicinity for a temporary roosting place. But the visitations apparently had ceased long ago with the breaking up of the roost by night raiders, who had indulged in wholesale killing of the birds. In January of this year, however, for reasons satisfactory to the birds but unknown to man, robins again sought the former attraction of these thickets and began to re-establish the roost in the shrubbery for a distance of 3 or 4 miles along both sides of a stream flowing between mountain ridges. So dense was the flight of the birds that every afternoon during the middle of January automobiles brought men, women, and children to the part of the main highway at the southern end of the roost to view the spectacle.

About a quarter to five the robins would begin to arrive, and in five minutes the air would be filled with them. As far as the eye could see, robins seemed to be dropping out of the heavens, to be lost in the cedar thickets, and it would be more than half an hour before any lessening could be noted in the arrivals.

The flight cloud was described by witnesses as being apparently more than 15 square miles in extent, a mile wide, moving for half an hour, at 30 miles an hour. The numbers of the robins at the roost must have run well into seven figures.

Not all the people attracted by the spectacle were curious sight-seers, coming merely to gaze and to wonder. Some thoughtlessly, and others probably answering the age-old call to hunt and kill, repeated the raids of former years, beginning anew the destruction of the famous roost, and in two nights wantonly slaughtered hundreds of the birds. When the earlier roost was broken up the robins were not protected by Federal law and international treaty. To-day the robins are receiving rigid protection in both the United States and Canada in accordance with the terms of the treaty protecting migratory birds. Possibly many of the raiders were ignorant of the changed legal status of the birds, and others did not know that they were killing actual friends of man. At any rate, the raids continued until local sportsmen and other friends of the birds brought the wholesale killings to the attention of the county game warden and of a member of the State game commission. These officials called in United States Game Warden W. L. Birsch, of the Biological Survey, and several sportsmen and business men of Asheboro who had been active in trying to break up the raids and who one night had stopped 40 or more men from molesting the birds.

On his arrival Warden Birsch found the killing already under control through the prompt measures taken by local residents. He concurred in the recommendation made that no legal action be taken looking toward prosecution of the raiders. So thoroughly aroused have the people been by the wholesale killings that public sentiment is now strongly against any further molestation of the robins or disturbance of their roost. The action thus taken for the protection of the roost has served to better inform the public regarding the legal protection of the robins, and has made it very unlikely that there will be any repetition of the raids or any necessity to hale the offenders before the Federal court.